

REASONS

WHY THE

Church of England,

As well as

DISSENTERS,

Should make Their

ADDRESS of THANKS

TO THE

King's Majesty,

For His late Gracious

DECLARATION

FOR

Liberty of Conscience.

Published with Allowance.

LONDON, Printed by *Henry Hills*, Printer to the King's Most
Excellent Majesty, for His Household and Chappel. 1687.

2 FASONS

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

REASONS

WHY THE

Church of England,

As well as

DISSENTERS,

Should make their Address of Thanks to the King's Majesty, for His late Gracious Declaration for Liberty of Conscience.

S I R,

THE Declaration of Indulgence was receiv'd by us with all imaginable Expressions of Joy and Thankfulness; for we are well assur'd, that by it Relief is given to the Body of the Nation, which of late Years has been expos'd to several sorts of Misery: And therefore we cannot but be amaz'd to hear, That any of our *Clergy* (as you write) have express'd themselves indecently about his Majesties granting it, and reproachfully of the Dissenters thankful receiving it.

When in the Declaration, we observ'd his Maje-

fty in the First place, to publish to the whole Kingdom his *Royal Resolution to protect and maintain the Archbishops, Bishops and Clergy, and all others of the Church of England, in the free Exercise of their Religion as by Law Establish'd, and in the Quiet and full Enjoyment of all their Possessions, without any Molestation or Disturbance whatsoever*, we doubted not but that our Clergy, as in Duty bound, would have made it their Work to possess the People with the Greatness and Transcendency of His Majesty's Grace towards them, and of the necessity of their rendring to his Majesty their humblest and most hearty Thanks; for it might be reasonably expected, that as *Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth*, on their ascending the Throne, did immediately suspend the Execution of those Penal Laws that were against Men of their own Religion, and made all the haste they could to Establish the Church of England: So His present Majesty might not only give an Indulgence to the Roman Catholic, but with the same speed make that Religion the establish'd Religion of the Nation.

But the King, as many of His Royal Predecessors of the same Communion with him, being greatly concern'd for the Welfare of all his People, is resolv'd to do his utmost that they may live at Ease and Quiet under Him. And having the Advantage of making his Reflections on the Conduct of the Four last Reigns, he finds no means more likely to obtain this End, than an entire *Liberty of Conscience*. And altho our Clergy are so disturb'd at the Thoughts of the Dissenters Ease, yet, if they would impartially consider it, they must needs see, that the King in giving Liberty to all, proceeds on the *only* Principle, by which
he

he can give it them. For had it not been His Majesties Sense and Opinion, That *Conscience ought not to be constrain'd, nor People forc'd in Matters of meer Religion*, His Majesty must necessarily Judge it His Duty to Almighty God to endeavour an Establishment of the Roman Catholick Religion, to the Subversion of the Church of *England*. To this Principle then, *viz. That Conscience ought not to be constrain'd*, are the Church of *England* owing for this Protection His Majesty is pleas'd to give 'em, and this Principle is of such a kind, as extends it self to every Man of Conscience throughout the Kingdom : So that the Matter will at last issue here, The Clergy must Thank His Majesty for His Granting to all His Subjects Liberty of Conscience, or, by their not doing it, plainly intimate, That Conscience ought to be constrain'd, and consequently, that it's the King's Duty to alter His Resolution of Protecting the Church of *England*, which in His Majesties Opinion is almost, if not altogether so Heretical, as the Fanaticks are:

Besides, it may not be amiss to observe, that the Church of *England* her self dares not dissent from His Majesty touching Liberty of Conscience: For as King *James*, and Sir *Edward Coke*, affirm, the Papiests were never punish'd for their Religion; nor, as others say, have the Fanaticks, since 1662. suffered for their Consciences; so that tho the Religion of the One Party has been made the Overt-act of Treason, and that of the other of Sedition, yet none are punish'd for Matters of meer Religion, whereby the Principle, that Conscience ought not to be compell'd, is yielded; and so long as the divers Religions in the Kingdom, do not encourage, nor countenance a practising on the Civil

vil Government, no Man ought to suffer for his Religion. And Experience assures us, that it's not *Liberty*, but *Restraints* laid on Conscience, that has been most prejudicial to the Nation and its Government. And if we do compare the Reigns of those Princes that have been on the Throne since the Dissenters have been numerous, with the Reigns of those that have been long before, we may see Reasons strong enough to conclude, that the indulging Dissenters from the establish'd Hierarchy, is become an effectual Mean to keep the *Mitre* in Subjection to the *Crown*. It's well known, that anciently the Interest of Six and Twenty Bishops in this Nation was so very great, that they were a Terror unto Kings. The *Barons* were not then so Potent, but the Bishops made as great a Figure; and as the Barons then having many Tenants, who all swore Homage to their Lords, did oft raise sturdy Rebellions; in like manner so the Bishops, to whom all the Inferiour Clergy swore Obedience. But 'tis the Alteration made on the Baronies that hath put an end to Baron-Wars; and seeing no Alteration hath been yet made on the Hierarchy, what, unless a great Part of the Clergy (now call'd Nonconformists) had withdrawn their Obedience from the Bishops, thereby making it the Interest of the Bishops to Submit unto their Prince, as well as by weakning 'em, put 'em out of a Capacity of Resisting, what else has put a check to Prelatic Insolence? For the conformable Clergy are as much oblig'd *now* to swear Obedience to their Bishops, as heretofore; and had there not been Dissenters from the Establish'd Hierarchy, Six and Twenty Bishops, by the Help of their Inferiour Clergy, and the Aid of their Attendants and other Adherents, might have been as able, and no doubt

as willing, not only to confront the Nobility, but even to Insult over their Prince.

And why must the Fanatick, of all Men in the World, be guilty of that Ingratitude that's worse than Brutism? Has not the King, by His Indulgence, brought 'em out of a Fiery Furnace, and made 'em Partakers of the Comforts of sitting down under their own Vines? Let's but consider the Usage they have had from the Church of *England* since Sixty Two, and see whether they have not reason to rejoice and be thankful for what the King has done for them.

You cannot but remember, that when we return'd with His late Majesty, how severe some of the Clergy were against the Fanaticks, assuring us, that they were but few, and these very illiterate, inconsiderable, and obstinate; though since we find 'em to be Men of some Sense, Moderation, and Candor, and, in good earnest, the Trading part of the Nation. However, we being possess'd with an Idea of their being unworthy of the least Favor of the Government, the Terms of their Communion with our Church were made so very strict, that such as would at first have submitted unto most of our Ceremonies, and to our Bishops too, as the King's Ministers, were necessitated to become Non-conformists, for not subscribing Assent and Consent to the Divine Right of Episcopacy; a thing our Nobility and Gentry never lik'd: And because they could not absolve those, who voluntarily took the Covenant, and still think themselves oblig'd in Conscience by it, from the Obligation of that Oath, which no doubt was enjoy'd the Clergy, not so much to secure our Church, as to make Fanaticks; for, 'twas exacted but for Twen-

ty Years, and our Church, ever since that time expir'd, firmly enough established.

And whereas these Nonconforming Ministers, either because they judg'd themselves consecrated to that Holy Function, or because they being depriv'd of all their Promotions, had no other way to preserve their Families from perishing, continued to preach; an Act was made against their Conventicling, in which that *Sanguinary Law* of the *Thirty Fifth* of *Eliz.* was declared to be in force against them, and on the Third Conviction for Preaching at a Conventicle, they were to be banish'd: And by the *Oxford-Act* these Ministers were actually banish'd from all Cities and Towns Corporate; ay, and from the Houses of their Friends or Relations, as well as their own Families, if convicted for Preaching in either of those Places, and could not take that Test, which since has been cast out of the House of Lords, when brought in with a Design of being more universally impos'd. Besides, the *22 Car. 1.* by which one Man suffers for anothers Fault, according unto which, Men have been convicted, disseis'd of their Property, and impoverish'd without a Jury, or their being call'd forth to speak for themselves. For, on these clandestine Convictions, Warrants have been granted out for Six, Eight, Ten, or Fourteen Conventicles at a time; so that many, before they could in the least imagin, that they lay expos'd to the Penalty of the Law, have had their Houses broken open by the Informers, Constables, and other Officers, who, like so many *Dragoons*, have for a long time kept the Possession, plundering and stealing, as well as distreining their Goods: And what was taken under colour of Law, though of greater value

value than the Fine amounted to, yet no return has been made of the Overplus, nor were any by the Statute required to do it. And after the Clergy had by their many Pulpit-Invectives instigated the Inferior Magistrate to Severity, this Statute is judg'd too mild, and the Meetings of the Fanaticks, when only for a Civil Visit, are by an *Innuendo* made to be with an intention to worship God, and that Intention interpreted to be an unlawful Act at Common Law, and adjudg'd to be a Rout or Riot, which has been contrary to what the Learned in the Laws have with much boldness affirm'd, who say, That to worship God, is no Fault at Common Law; it is but *malum prohibitum*, and therefore cannot be made Routs or Riots. But this is not the whole of these Mens Misery; for so common were the manifest Perjuries of Informers, and so great the Reputation given 'em, that when the Dissenters have been in a Journey from home, they have been convicted for being at Routs or Riots several Miles distant. To all which let's add the many Desolations that have proceeded from the prosecuting 'em on the 23 Eliz. under the Lash of which, as many worthy Lawyers declar'd, they fell not, and (what must not escape our Observation) when several great Lawyers were prepar'd to argue on the Dissenters behalf, they were denied it, because one of the Justices then on the Kings Bench told 'em, That he had seen an old Queen Elizabeth's Proclamation that had fully decided the Case, and so without an Hearing were over-rul'd. And tho by this Law they were condemn'd to no less than 20 *l. per Menssem* for not coming to the Common-prayer, this was too little; the *Dottors Commons* Gentlemen therefore must have an Hand too in this Matter, who exceeding all Bounds, have been the Ruine of

many Families. But these Methods not ridding the Land of 'em, the 35 of *Eliz.* which issues either in the Death or Banishment of all those who were convicted for being at a Conventicle *this Month* in which they went not to Church, (notwithstanding the great Doubts that many have of its being in force) is put afresh into Execution, and on it many are Indicted, and some Banished.

Time would fail us to tell you of the many cast into *Newgate* in the Visitation-time, when the *Contagion* was within those Walls; that there perished; of the several Hundreds, that in this and several other Gaols, have since miserably ended their Days; as also to acquaint you with the Endeavors that our Clergy have used to encrease their Bonds; and when some in Parliament were disposed to favour 'em, what Methods were taken to hinder a Bill of Comprehension and Indulgence. To write an History of the Practises of some of our Zealots, the fair Promises they made to ensnare the Presbyterian Parliament-men to a Compliance with them, in opposing His late Majesty's Gracious Indulgence, and their forsaking 'em as soon as the Declaration was recall'd, the Crafts us'd to cajo'e the poor Fanatick the last Parliament that was at *Westminster* in the late King's Reign, by those who in the House, would speak as if their very Souls were for the Relief of Tender Consciences, but yet would Boat it over to *Lambeth* to consult how to spoil all: Even *Shaftsbury* himself was such an Enemy to the Dissenters, that when he was desired by a Gentleman of that Parliament, and from whom I had it, not to postpone the Bill of Comprehension and Indulgence to that of Exclusion, his Reply was, *Let the Fanatick alone,*

alone, what need we concern our selves so much for them? For if we first indulge them, they'll most undoubtedly relinquish us, and we shall hear no more of their being for the Secluding Bill. To write a full History of all this, would require more Paper than is now allotted us; and seeing these Hints are enough to shew the Misery the Fanatick has been expos'd unto, we may with the less regret wave it, and immediately draw to this Conclusion, That *A Deliverance from all these Miseries deserves the greatest Thanks.* What less can the Dissenters do? In a word, if they accept of His Majesty's Grace, are they not worse than Brutes if they present not their Address of Thanks? And, un'less they accept of His Majesty's Grace, they must resolve to be fond of Misery. They must not only submit to Church of *England* Severity, but must scorn and despise all offer'd Relief, and be wheedled by one part of the Church of *England* into the Sin of Unthankfulness, that the other part may have just cause of Complaint against them to His Majesty; that, if possibly, while in this Life, they may put themselves out of all hopes of Ease. Have they not sufficiently felt, in His late Majesty's Reign, what 'tis to reject Royal Grace, that they must make a fresh Experiment of it once more? If not, why trouble you them with the noise of the *Law*, the *Law*? Must they all be good Lawyers, before they can be good Christians, or good Men? Some of 'em remember, that within a few Years, some Noble Lords, no Friends to Arbitrary Government, were for petitioning the King to *Suspend Penal Laws*, rather than *Repeal* 'em; and, they have met with a Vote of a late Parliament, That the Penal Laws ought not to be put in Execution against Dissenters; and, for ought they know, on very good Reasons.

[12]

Reasons of State: And, if they must be *Suspended*,
who must do it, the King, or a Justice of Peace?
Think on these things, and consider them well, and
we doubt not but you'll be of our Mind.

FALE.

F I N I S.